Regional Bishop welcomes international ecumenical guests

Schwerin. One day after her inauguration in Schwerin Cathedral, the Regional Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum-Schmidt received today (11 June) international church representatives from 13 countries. In addition to the ecumenical guests, the exchange at the office of the regional bishop in Schwerin was attended by staff from the Center for Mission and Ecumenism in the North Church as well as the Department of Mission, Ecumenism and Diaconia of the Landeskirchenamt and Margrit Semmler as representative of the First Church Council.

In addition, the Regional Bishop invited Lukas Wißmann to take part in the Voluntary Ecological Year at the Center for Mission and Ecumenism and as co-supporter of the Fridays for Future Movement in Hamburg. The talks focused on prospects for relations with the 29 partner churches of the North Church and common themes.  
These included mutual ideas and expectations, the current and future mission as churches, best-practice examples, as well as challenges for churches worldwide and climate justice. Already in her introductory sermon on Whitsun Monday (June 10), Regional Bishop Kühnbaum-Schmidt pointed to the urgent need for action in the face of climate change and the shared responsibility of Christians for the preservation of creation.  
  
"The moving and cross-border Spirit of God we celebrate on Pentecost is needed right now. In the midst of current discussions about new boundaries, isolation and social division, we focus on what unites us in all its diversity. This meeting with women and men from all over the world is a good example: we live on different continents, belong to different traditions and denominations. But united in our faith in Christ, we are on the search for peace and reconciliation, taking on our responsibility, for example on the topics of climate justice, migration and social justice - here in our country and around the world, "said Regional Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum-Schmidt.  
  
Silvia Genz, President of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, said: "We all face very similar challenges: How can we inspire people for our faith? Where can we learn from each other about gender equality? Or what answers can we formulate to the global issues of our time: climate justice, flight and migration, social division? The reflection on our common roots and the promotion of exchange programs help us. "Genz had held the reading on Pentecost Monday in Schwerin Cathedral during the introductory service.  
  
Margrit Semmler, a member of the First Church Council, said: "As we are mostly in contact with our partner churches on a bilateral basis, this more intensive exchange with each other is all the more important. It is good to hear from each other that we are dealing with very similar topics in different places and nobody is traveling alone. Especially in times of political turmoil it will become even more important in the future to communicate theologically. "  
  
The Director of the Center for Mission and Ecumenism, dr. Christian Wollmann, said: "Worldwide, we experience nationalization and separation tendencies. By contrast, in our partnerships, we strongly believe that we are a worldwide church. We maintain that we have responsibility for each other and each other for our societies, even if there are sometimes differences of opinion. In the urgent common theme of climate justice, we pull together and can help shape our world positively. "  
  
Church representatives and church representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe and America took part in the talks. Bishop Zacharia Wachira Kahuthu from the Kenyan Evangelical Lutheran Church and Bishop MZ Manong from the Cape Oranje diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South came from Africa Africa.  
  
From India, Bishop Asish Kumal Pal of the Evangelical Lutheran Jeypore Church and Bishop Godwin Nag of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Assam have come to Schwerin. Bishop Nag also delivered a message of greeting from the ecumenical guests on the Schwerin market place on Whit Monday. The China National Christian Council is represented by Vice-President Shen Xuebin and Foreign Relations Director Zhou Xiaoyan. Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar also has a small Evangelical Lutheran Church of 3,000 members in Jordan and the Holy Land.  
  
Most of the guests represent churches in Europe: From the diocese of Lichfield the Church of England Bishop Michael Ipgrave and from the Diocese of Wrocławska the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland Bishop Waldemar Pytel. From Latvia Pastor Jana Jeruma-Grindberga from St. Savior's Church of the Church of England in Riga and Archbishop Lauma Zušēvics from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia abroad have arrived. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania has sent Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis. Andreas Wöhle of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and Bishop Fredrik Modéus of the Diocese of Växjo of the Church of Sweden came. Next to Silvia Genz (Brazil) is Leonardo Schindler, President of the Evangelical Church on the Rio de la Plata in Argentina,  
  
Overall, the North Church maintains worldwide relations with more than 30 churches, dioceses and church institutions in more than twenty countries. They are coordinated and maintained by the Center for Mission and Ecumenism in the North Church.